

‘Why communities need a long-term plan for housing’.

A summary of The National Housing Federation’s webinar 2nd July 2024

A recording of the webinar is [available on YouTube](#).

Update from National Housing Federation

Patrick Merton-Jones set out the current situation looking at how homelessness is rising more rapidly in rural areas than in urban and housing waiting lists are growing fast in rural areas. Rural businesses are having trouble finding staff and key services are being affected by a lack of housing. Patrick said that, with a long-term plan, the next government could, by 2035, achieve significant outcomes such as ending child homelessness, boosting productivity and ensuring warm and decent homes for many more families.

A positive economic case for investment in rural communities

Mark Pagnell, economist and chair of English Rural Housing Association, explored some of the rural economy’s metrics and set out what could be achieved with appropriate investment. He pointed out that the economic needs of rural areas tend to be hidden in government reporting because economic data is reported by regions that include both urban and rural areas. If rural areas are considered together as one region a case quickly emerges for investment that would reap significant benefits, both social and economic. He made the case that affordable housing is key to unlocking these benefits.

Government Asks from the Rural Services Network

Kerry Booth, chief executive of the Rural Service Network pointed out that Government spending per head is much higher in urban areas than in rural despite the fact services cost more to deliver in rural areas. Her asks included:

- A rural housing strategy funding with a dedicated rural affordable housing funding programme.
- A national homelessness strategy that includes investment in rural areas.
- A five-year programme funding Rural Housing Enablers.

Young people and Long-Term Rural Housing

Nik Harwood of *Young Somerset* described how young people experience the lack of housing in rural areas. Where job creating investments are made in rural areas this can lead to a sharp increase in local housing costs that force young people out of an area. He discussed the impact this can have on young people's personal stories and argued that secure affordable housing was necessary for inter-generational stability in rural areas.